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ABSTRACT

The parents of a six-year-old disruptive boy were observed interacting with their son during 20 assessment-oriented, 10-minute experimental sessions. An experimental design consisting of alternately arranged baseline and self-monitoring conditions was utilized. Following the reversal-to-baseline phase, parents were given specialized training in self-recording positive parental praise. Results indicated that self-monitoring of positive verbalizations was an effective means of producing reactive changes in parental behavior, and training in self-monitoring increased parent-observer accuracy scores to more than acceptable levels of self-recording positive parental praise. Results indicated that self-monitoring of positive verbalizations was an effective means of producing reactive changes in parental behavior, and training in self-monitoring increased parent-observer accuracy scores tomore than acceptable levels of agreement. These findings are discussed with regard to the simplicity of a parental self-observational intervention, and recommendations are made for continuing investigations in the area. (Author)

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Increasing Reactivity and Accuracy of Parental Self-Observation

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Abstract

The parents of a six-year-old disruptive boy were observed interacting with their son during twenty assessment-oriented, ten-minute experimental sessions. An A - B_1 - A' - B_2 experimental design was utilized, consisting of alternately arranged baseline and self-monitoring conditions. Following the reversal-to-baseline phase, parents were given specialized training in self-recording positive parental praise. Results indicated that (a) self-monitoring of positive verbalizations was an effective means of producing reactive changes in parental behavior, and (b) training in self-monitoring increased parent-observer accuracy scores to more than acceptable levels of agreement. These findings were discussed with regard to the simplicity of a parental self-observational intervention and recommendations were made for continuing investigations in the area.

Increasing Reactivity and Accuracy of Parental Self-Observation

Self-monitoring has received considerable recent attention in the behavior modification literature with regard to both its clinical utility and research application (Mahoney & Thoresen, 1974; Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974). More specifically, emphasis has been placed upon increasing: (a) therapeutic reactivity of self-observation, and (b) overall accuracy of the self-monitoring process. With parents receiving an increased role in the evaluation and modification of child behaviors (Bornstein, 1974; O'Dell, 1974), however, parental self-recording of intervention effects has assumed greater salience. Although Herbert and Baer (1972) demonstrated that self-monitoring increased the amount of maternal attention paid to appropriate child behaviors, they were unable to demonstrate functional control in that a no-counting-withdrawal condition failed to produce a behavioral reversal. Doleys, Doster and Cartelli (1976) have also examined the effect of self-monitoring on parental behaviors. Unfortunately, due to multiple treatment confounding (Campbell & Stanley, 1966), they too were unable to isolate the specific behavioral procedures responsible for change within the experimental situation. Moreover, recent research has indicated that parents may either manipulate the deviancy level of their children (Johnson & Lobitz, 1974) or remain highly inaccurate in their behavioral observations (Clement & Milne, 1967; Schnelle, 1974; Walter & Gilmore, 1973). Therefore, investigations in the "parenting" area have not as of yet clearly demonstrated parental behavior change as a function of reactive self-monitoring and/or methods by which to improve the accuracy of parental reports.

The purpose of the present investigation was therefore two-fold: (a) to assess whether self-monitoring is an effective agent of change in modifying positive

parental praise, and (b) to increase the accuracy of parental self-recording through self-monitoring feedback training. In addition, the current research allowed for further examination of valence effects within the self-monitoring process by utilizing data obtained from a clinic-referred deviant-child family.

Method

Subjects, Setting and Experimental Design

Mr. and Mrs. B and their six-year-old son Johnny were referred for treatment by their family physician. Johnny had been reported to be virtually unmanageable in the home since age three, with major behavioral problems having begun to develop over the past two years. Mr. and Mrs. B and Johnny were informed that in order to adequately assess the problematic situation, a baseline period of observation in a controlled setting would be necessary. All family members were told that twenty, ten-minute observation sessions would be required prior to the initiation of treatment. Observational sessions were held in a one-way mirrored room at the University of Montana Clinical Psychology Center. The room was equipped with a variety of play materials including a plastic punch-me doll, crayons and paper, puzzles, play doh, tinker toys, doctor kits, etc.

The general procedure utilized was that of an A - B_1 - A' - B_2 experimental design: A = Baseline I, B_1 = Self-monitoring I, A' = Baseline II, and B_2 = Self-monitoring II. Each experimental condition, composed of five consecutive ten-minute sessions, was held at intervals one week apart. During each of the observational sessions, trained observers recorded pre-determined child behaviors and positive parental verbal remarks. Permission was obtained to tape record all observational sessions, and these recordings were later used in the self-monitoring training phase which took place immediately following the Baseline II condition.

Dependent Variables

Parental reactivity. Positive parental praise was defined as: any verbal attention or approval delivered specifically to the target child, such as "good boy" or "Johnny, I really like what you're doing." As a means of assessing change in the frequency of self-monitored behaviors across conditions, reactivity was plotted using the data as recorded solely by the trained observers.

Parental accuracy. An accuracy of self-recording measure was generated by first having Mr. and Mrs. B self-monitor the frequency of positive comments directed toward Johnny during the self-monitoring conditions. Accuracy scores were later determined by comparing parental records with records of the trained observers.

Child observation. A purpose of the present study was to examine whether parental self-monitoring of positive remarks increased the frequency of such verbalizations. Hence, in order to insure there were no differences in child behaviors across conditions, Johnny's behavior was observed and recorded during each of the experimental sessions. The child behavior categories observed were: Inappropriate (i.e., fighting, destroying property, verbal hostility) and Appropriate (handling of materials in an acceptable manner, following instructions within a 20-second period, etc.).

Experimental Conditions and Self-Monitoring Training

Baseline I. Family members were brought into the clinic and informed that the authors simply wanted to see them "interact with one another as you typically do in your own home". Although subjects were informed that observers would be recording their interaction, details of the observational categories were not discussed.

Self-Monitoring I (SM I). Mr. and Mrs. B were first provided with a valence manipulation informing them that "praising techniques have been repeatedly shown to be of positive value in modifying inappropriate child behaviors." They were then given recording instructions (Mahoney, 1977) and asked to independently self-monitor the frequency of positive parental statements during SM I observational sessions. The authors defined positive parental praise, gave examples of its occurrence in the observational situation and provided explicit instructions on how to self-monitor. Following three author-modeled examples of correct self-monitoring, Mr. and Mrs. B were asked to enact a series of parent-child interactions until five correct instances of self-recording were performed. All family members were then invited into the experimental room, again being informed that observers were to be recording their interaction and to respond to one another as they typically do at home.

Baseline II. Aside from the re-administration of the valence manipulation, this condition was identical to Baseline I.

Self-Monitoring Training. Following the final observational session of Baseline II, Mr. and Mrs. B were given specialized training in self-recording positive parental praise. Both parents, under the direction of the authors, listened to eight minutes of selected playback from their previously recorded observational sessions. During the first four minutes, the authors simultaneously recorded the occurrence of target behaviors along with Mr. and Mrs. B, stopping the tape every 30 seconds to provide feedback regarding the self-observational process. During the next two minutes, the tape was stopped every 60 seconds for accuracy checks, and during the final two minutes, feedback was provided only at the conclusion

of the cassette. At each of the pauses, the authors either reinforced the subjects for perfect self-recording or commented in a corrective manner regarding the errors which had been committed. Both subjects were able to monitor target behaviors without error during the final two-minute, no-feedback period.

Self-Monitoring II (SM II). This condition was identical to SM I.

Results

Reliability

Observer inter-rater reliabilities for parent behaviors were, Baseline I: Mr. B = 100%, Mrs. B = 100%; SM I: Mr. B = 95%, Mrs. B = 100%: Baseline II: Mr. B = 100%, Mrs. B = 95%; SM II: Mr. B = 100%, Mrs. B = 100%. The level of agreement for child behaviors were, Baseline I = 90%; SM I = 90%; Baseline II = 85%; SM II = 90%.

Appropriate Child Behaviors

The mean percent of appropriate child behaviors across experimental conditions was as follows: Baseline I = 55%; SM I = 53%; Baseline II = 54%; SM II = 57%. These results indicate that no significant change in the level of appropriate child behaviors occurred across experimental conditions.

Perental Reactivity

Insert Figure 1 about here

Results indicate that for Mr. B, the mean percent of intervals during which positive verbalizations occurred was: Baseline I = 1%; SM I = 18%; Baseline II = 8%; SM II = 17%. The mean percent of intervals during which positive verbalizations were recorded for Mrs. B was: Baseline I = 4%; SM I = 26%; Baseline II = 11%; SM II = 24%. These results thus indicate that self-monitoring substantially increased

the frequency of positive interactions initiated by parents with regard to their child's behavior.

Parental Accuracy

Insert Figure 2 about here

Results indicate that the mean parent-observer agreement data for Mr. B was: SM I = 53%; SM II = 84%. Parent-observer agreement data for Mrs. B was: SM I= 63%; SM II = 88%. Thus, parental self-recording of positive verbalizations become decidedly more accurate following the self-monitoring training condition.

Discussion

The results of the present investigation clearly indicate that self-monitoring of positive praise is an effective tool for altering parental verbalizations. Moreover, the utilization of an ABAB reversal design allowed for demonstration of functional control over the target behavior. Of equal importance, however, was the finding that training in self-monitoring increased parent-observer accuracy scores to more than acceptable levels of agreement. Furthermore, since reactivity levels were unaltered from SM I to SM II, it would appear as though self-monitoring training increased accuracy without effecting reactivity. This is highly consistent with the previous literature regarding self-monitoring training effects (Bornstein, Mungas, Quevillon, Kniivila, Miller, & Holombo, in press; Nelson, Lipinky, & Boykin, in press). Also consistent with previous literature was the fact that reactivity levels were virtually identical across both baseline conditions (i.e., with and without the valence manipulation in effect). This finding lends further support to the notion that valence manipulations, in the absence of self-

monitoring, will not generate behavior change (Sieck & McFall, 1976). Thus, the results of the current research would suggest that the relatively simple and inexpensive technique of self-observation may produce substantial parental behavior change within a clinically-referred deviant-child family and that self-monitoring training is an effective means of increasing the accurancy of parental self-observation.

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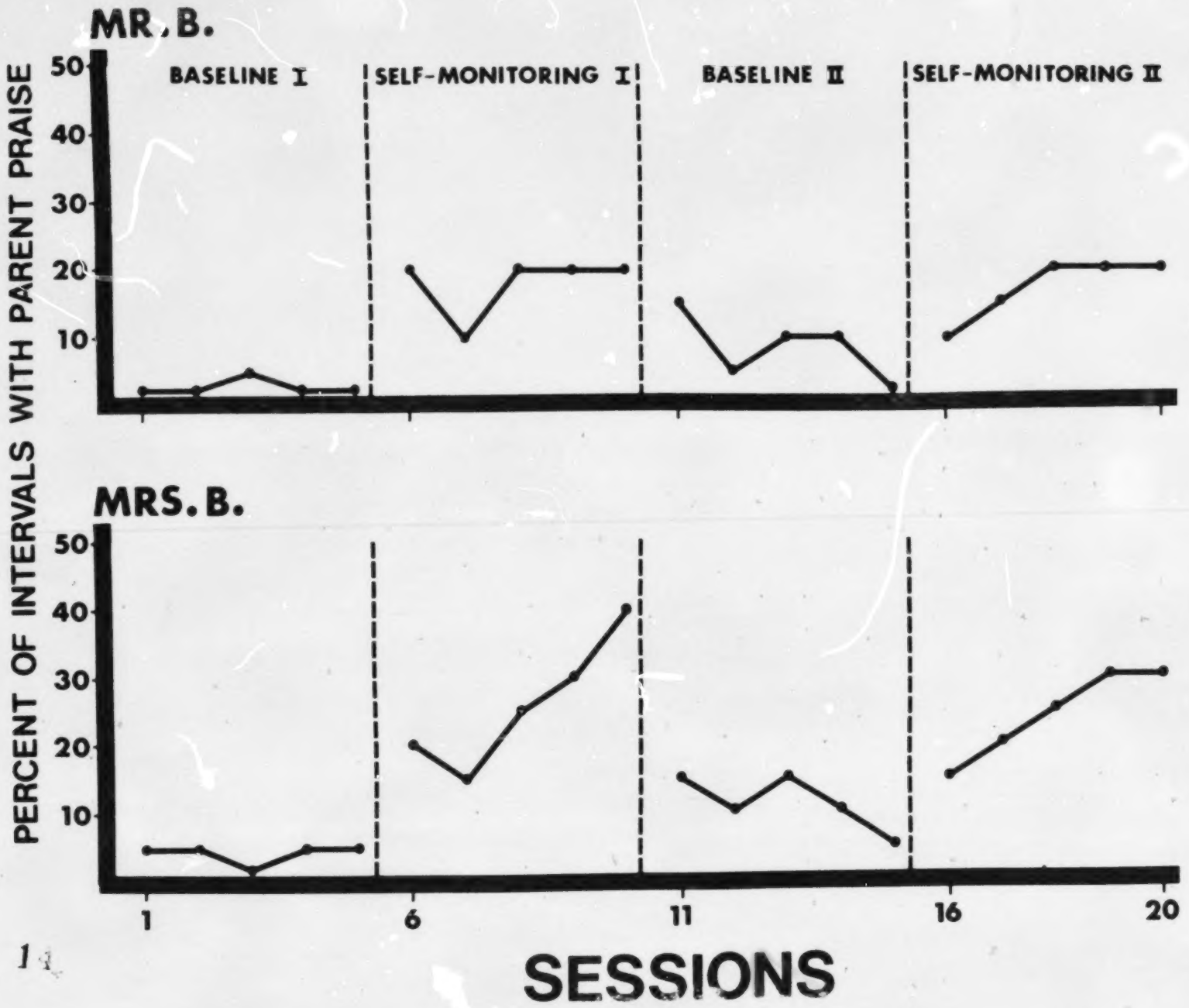
Figure Captions

Figure 1. Percent of intervals with positive parental praise across experimental conditions.

Figure 2. Percent of individual parent-observer agreement data for SM I and SM II.


MR. B.
BASELINE I
SELF-MONITORING I
BASELINE II
SELF-MONITORING II
PERCENT OF INTERVALS WITH PARENT PRAISE
50
40
30
20
10
MRS. B.
50
40
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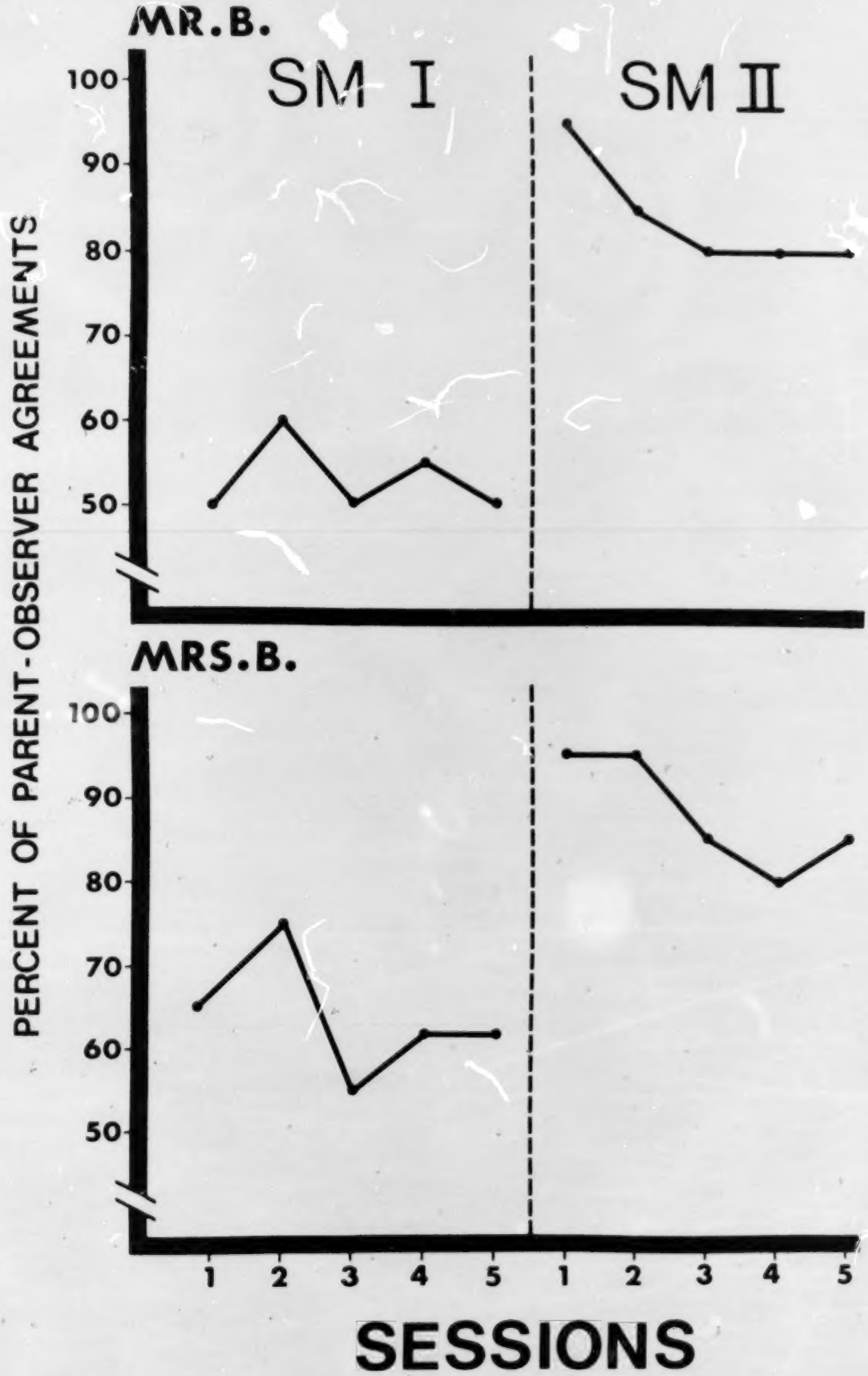
MR.B.
SM I
SM II
100
90
80
70
60
50
MRS.B.
100
90
80
70
60
50
PERCENT OF PARENT-OBSERVER AGREEMENTS
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
SESSIONS